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Fifteenth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

I. Background

1. The present document is my fifteenth semi-annual report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It provides a comprehensive assessment of the process of the implementation of the resolution since my last report, issued on 19 October 2012 (S/2011/648). It highlights in particular the absence of tangible progress on key provisions of the resolution, and concerns that continue to impede efforts to strengthen the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Lebanon, which is the main objective of the resolution.

2. During the period under review, the leadership of Hizbullah has acknowledged publicly for the first time that it has been supported on several levels by the Islamic Republic of Iran since the creation of the militia in 1982.

3. Over the past six months, the deepening crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has continued to affect Lebanon, increasing political polarization and concern that the unrest in the Syrian Arab Republic could have negative ramifications for Lebanon's stability. It has further stalled processes that are fundamental for the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) and other Security Council resolutions pertaining to Lebanon. In addition, Syrian security forces have continued to carry out operations along the Syrian-Lebanese border, part of which has been mined in recent months. In a number of instances, shooting at or across the border had led to the death or injury of civilians on Lebanese soil. The most recent tragic incident occurred on 9 April when a Lebanese journalist was killed as the car carrying him and two colleagues came under heavy targeted fire from the Syrian army across the border.

II. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

4. I am glad to recall that, since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) on 2 September 2004, several of its provisions have now been implemented. Presidential and parliamentary elections were held in a free and fair manner. The Syrian Arab Republic withdrew its troops and military assets from Lebanon in April 2005. Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic established full diplomatic relations in 2009.

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5. The President, Michel Sleiman, and the Prime Minister, Najib Mikati, have continued to affirm during the reporting period Lebanon's respect for all United Nations resolutions. However, against the background of the escalating crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic there has been yet again no concrete progress towards the implementation of the outstanding provisions of resolution 1559 (2004). The delineation of the Syrian-Lebanese border, which was strongly encouraged by the Security Council in its resolution 1680 (2006), has not yet been carried out. Moreover, the existence and activities of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias continue to pose a threat to the stability of the country and the region, and highlight the need for the Government of Lebanon and the Lebanese Armed Forces to increase their efforts to reach a full monopoly on the possession of weapons and the use of force throughout Lebanon.

6. My representatives and I have remained in regular contact with all parties in Lebanon over the reporting period, as well as with relevant regional and international leaders. I visited Lebanon from 13 to 15 January 2012 where I held talks with President Sleiman, Prime Minister Mikati, and the Speaker of Parliament, Nabih Berri, as well as a number of representatives of Lebanese parties. During those meetings, I reiterated the United Nations unwavering commitment to the stability and security of Lebanon, as well as the need for Lebanon to meet all of its international obligations, in particular those under relevant Security Council resolutions. In this context, I expressed my deep disappointment at the lack of progress in the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) over more than two years.

A. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon

7. The objective of resolution 1559 (2004) is to strengthen the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout Lebanon, in line with the Taif Agreement of 1989 to which all the political parties in Lebanon have committed themselves. This goal has remained the highest priority of my efforts to facilitate the implementation of all resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.

8. The Security Council in its resolution 1680 (2006) strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request by the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border. I have continued to encourage the two countries to achieve the full delineation of their common border. There has been no progress in the period under review on the delineation of the border, particularly in the context of the ongoing crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. However, I recall that the delineation and demarcation of Lebanon's boundaries remains an essential element to guarantee the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is also a critical step to allow for proper border control. While acknowledging the bilateral nature of border delineation, progress on this matter remains an obligation of the two countries under resolution 1680 (2006), derived from resolution 1559 (2004).

9. Against the backdrop of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic more than 10,000 Syrian nationals have crossed the border into Lebanon to seek refuge from the fighting and are being assisted by the United Nations and the Government of Lebanon. Separately, during the reporting period the Syrian army has been

responsible for incursions, notably in October 2011. There were also cross-border shooting incidents, including one on 9 April in which a Lebanese television cameraman was killed, which I strongly deplored. I called on the Syrian Government to respect Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity in accordance with Security Council resolutions. In relation to the October incidents the Government of Lebanon noted that they had occurred in areas where the border is not delineated or demarcated, or is disputed. This underlines the importance of clear and unambiguous borders between the two countries.

10. The continuing occupation by the Israel Defense Forces of the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line stands in violation of Lebanon's sovereignty, and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). My representatives and I have continued to engage closely with both parties to facilitate the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the area, as detailed in my last report to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2012/124).

11. Efforts in relation to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area have not recorded any progress, as I have still not received any responses from either the Syrian Arab Republic or Israel to the provisional definition of the area contained in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), issued on 30 October 2007 (S/2007/641).

12. During the reporting period, the Israel Defense Forces continued to make almost daily intrusions into Lebanese airspace, mainly by unmanned aerial vehicles, but also with fighter jets. These overflights are violations of Lebanese sovereignty and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). The Government of Lebanon has repeatedly protested against these violations. I have deplored them and demanded that they cease immediately. Israeli authorities claim in turn that these overflights are carried out for security reasons, citing alleged breaches to the arms embargo enforced pursuant to resolution 1701 (2006).

B. Extension of Lebanese Government control over all Lebanese territory

13. The Government of Lebanon has expressed its intention to extend the State's authority over all Lebanese territory as called for by resolution 1559 (2004) and the Taif Agreement of 1989. The Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces play a crucial role in implementing this commitment. The ability of the Lebanese State to fully exercise its authority over all of its territory has remained curtailed, however. A series of security incidents have highlighted once again the threats to the security of Lebanon posed by armed groups outside of the control of the State and by the proliferation of weapons.

14. As I reported in my last report on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2012/124), a number of security incidents illustrate the continuing fragility and vulnerability of the situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) during the reporting period. The most serious incident occurred on 9 December when a roadside explosive device detonated targeting a UNIFIL patrol in the suburbs of Tyre: it injured five peacekeepers and two Lebanese civilian bystanders. I condemned this terrorist attack, which was the first against the peacekeeping mission in its area of operations since June 2007. The Government of Lebanon pledged to investigate this attack, and

I have reminded Lebanese officials that I expect to review any reports arising from this investigation in the near term.

15. On 29 November, two rockets were fired across the Blue Line. On 11 December, one rocket was fired from southern Lebanon towards Israel. On 19 December, four rockets ready to be fired were found by the Lebanese Armed Forces in the UNIFIL area of operations. I condemned all indiscriminate rocket attacks and urged all parties to exercise maximum restraint. In addition, three explosions occurred in Tyre, two on 16 November and one on 28 December, causing damage to property. All these incidents are serious violations of relevant Security Council resolutions as they manifest the presence of unauthorized weapons. The Lebanese authorities and politicians across the political spectrum in Lebanon have condemned all these incidents, which represent attempts to destabilize the situation in the south of Lebanon.

16. Over the reporting period, on some occasions, UNIFIL again faced restrictions to its freedom of movement in its area of operations, which in some instances have endangered the safety and security of the United Nations peacekeepers. The freedom of movement of UNIFIL and the security and safety of its personnel are integral to the effective execution of the Force's mandate. I condemned such restrictions on United Nations peacekeepers' freedom of movement. The primary responsibility for ensuring the security and the freedom of movement of UNIFIL in its area of operations lies with the Government of Lebanon, including the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces.

17. The reporting period has been marked by demonstrations of solidarity or protests in relation to the evolving situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. A worrisome incident occurred on 10 February, when fighting broke out between members of the Alawite and Sunni communities in the northern city of Tripoli resulting in three people killed, and more than 20 injured, including members of the Lebanese Armed Forces. The Lebanese Armed Forces successfully intervened to halt the fighting.

18. Taken together the incidents listed above, in addition to the assassination attempt on 4 April on the leader of the Lebanese Forces, Samir Geagea, are indicative yet again of the ongoing security threats in the country and the proliferation of weapons held by non-State actors. They are also a reminder that the Lebanese authorities should do more to impose law and order throughout the country.

19. Security sources in Lebanon have continued to report shootings and explosions in and around paramilitary infrastructures in the eastern Beka'a Valley belonging to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) and Fatah al-Intifada headquartered in Damascus, confirming that paramilitary training occurs in these facilities. The permanent presence of such bases along the Syrian-Lebanese border adds to the general porosity of parts of the land border and poses a challenge for the control of the border by the Lebanese security forces. It also makes the delineation of the border more difficult.

20. With regard to Lebanon's border with the Syrian Arab Republic, there continue to be reports of illegal arm transfers now allegedly taking place in both directions. Several Member States have continued to express deep concern over the illegal transfer of weapons across the land borders. Lebanese officials acknowledge the

porous nature of the border and the possibility that arms smuggling occurs. I take these reports very seriously but the United Nations does not have the means to verify them independently. I raised this matter with Lebanese officials during my visit to Beirut and urged them to increase efforts in a more systematic way to ensure strict control along the border. The Lebanese Armed Forces informed the United Nations that the deterioration of the security situation in the Syrian Arab Republic had prompted them to adopt increased measures for the control of the border in order to prevent the movement of arms and military personnel into and out of Lebanon.

21. Given the above-mentioned concerns and the continuing existence and activities of militias in Lebanon, improving the management and control of Lebanon's land borders is critical to prevent the illegal flow of weapons to armed groups. Despite the commitment expressed by the Government of Lebanon to adopt a comprehensive national strategy for border management, little concrete progress has been accomplished on this matter in recent months. In addition, it is an obligation under Security Council resolutions that all States take the necessary measures to prevent the transfer of arms to groups outside the control of the Government of Lebanon. This is a critical factor for stability in Lebanon and the region.

C. Disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias

22. In its resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council called for the disarming and disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias. This key remaining provision of the resolution has yet to be implemented. It reaffirms a decision that all Lebanese committed themselves to in the Taif Agreement in 1989, in the aftermath of the civil war. That agreement led at the time to Lebanese militias — with the exception of Hizbullah — giving up their weapons. The agreement must be preserved and implemented by all in order to avoid the spectre of renewed confrontation among the Lebanese.

23. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias continue to operate in the country outside of the Government's control in serious violation of resolution 1559 (2004). While several groups across the political spectrum in Lebanon possess weapons outside Government control, the armed component of Hizbullah is the most significant and most heavily armed Lebanese militia in the country, reaching almost the capacities of a regular army. The leadership of Hizbullah acknowledges that it maintains a substantial military arsenal. Hizbullah is also a Lebanese political party which is part of the current Government coalition. In addition, there are a series of Palestinian armed groups operating in the country inside and outside the refugee camps.

24. Over the reporting period, there has been no tangible progress towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias as called for in the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). During my visit to Lebanon in January, I indicated to my Lebanese interlocutors both privately and publicly the serious risks that the continuing existence of these militias in the country poses to the stability of the country and domestic peace. I urged them to address this matter without further delay, as it is their obligation under resolution 1559 (2004). Since

the adoption of the resolution in 2004, with the exception of the National Dialogue of 2006 that took some preliminary decisions on this matter that were never implemented, no concrete steps have been taken to address this crucial issue, which stands at the heart of the sovereignty and the political independence of Lebanon. Meanwhile, since the adoption of the resolution, several Lebanese groups and individuals have spoken up against the presence of militias in the country, in particular Hizbullah. The continuing existence of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias undermines the right of every Lebanese citizen to live without fear of physical harm and the consolidation of Lebanon as a democratic State and the stability of the country and the region.

25. The issue of Hizbullah's weapons has remained central to political debate in Lebanon. I recall that the previous tenuous Lebanese consensus on the legitimacy of the arms of Hizbullah has broken down. Opposition figures have singled out Hizbullah's weapons as a destabilizing factor in the country and an obstacle for democracy, as many Lebanese see the continuing existence of such arms as an implicit threat of their use within Lebanon, bearing in mind the events of May 2008. On its part, Hizbullah rejected those statements and claims that its arsenal, separate from that of the Lebanese State, is for defensive purposes against Israel.

26. In several public pronouncements over the past six months, the leadership of Hizbullah stated that it has upgraded the strength of its military capabilities and will seek to continue to do so in blatant defiance of resolution 1559 (2004). In addition, it has disclosed publicly that, since the creation of the militia in 1982, the Islamic Republic of Iran has provided it on a regular basis with political, moral, financial and logistical support, in violation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

27. On several occasions, I have stated my firm conviction that the disarmament of Hizbullah and other militias can best be achieved through a Lebanese-led political process, which will achieve the ultimate goal that there are no weapons or armed forces in Lebanon other than those of the Lebanese State. For that purpose, I recall that the Lebanese leaders had reconvened the National Dialogue after the events of May 2008, the main mandate of which was to develop a national defence strategy that would address the critical issue of weapons outside the control of the State. Regrettably, this forum has not met since 4 November 2010, thereby leaving this sensitive matter concerning the stability of Lebanon unaddressed.

28. President Sleiman has expressed on numerous occasions, including to me, his intention to reconvene the National Dialogue. However, there is no indication at this stage that it will happen soon. The participants in the 14 March alliance have announced that they would attend only if the forum discusses Hizbullah's military arsenal. The latter request was rejected by Hizbullah and its allies, which would not oppose reconvening the National Dialogue if it were to stick to the generic formula of the development of a "national defence strategy".

29. With regard to the situation of Palestinians in Lebanon, the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization has reiterated its call upon all Palestinians in Lebanon to respect the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon and adhere to Lebanese law and security requirements.

30. The situation in most of the 12 Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon has remained relatively stable, with the exception of Ain al-Hilweh. Occasional security incidents and inter-factional clashes continued to occur in the camp. In particular,

two bodyguards were killed on 14 and 18 December 2011 during assassination attempts against a Fatah security official. In addition, the Lebanese Armed Forces have seized weapons bound for the camp. The threat of internal violence that could potentially spill over into surrounding areas still exists in a number of camps as some of them continue to provide safe haven for those who seek to escape the authority of the State.

31. In March, the Government of Lebanon disclosed that it had discovered a terrorist cell affiliated to Al-Qaida that planned attacks on the Lebanese army. It alleged that the cell had branches in Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp. The Lebanese army has urged the Palestinian factions inside the camp to hand over the members of the cell, in particular its leader who is reportedly residing there.

32. The humanitarian conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon have remained dire and precarious. Prime Minister Mikati pledged that his Government would do its best to improve their living conditions. The long-awaited decree to implement amendments to the labour and social code already agreed by the Lebanese Parliament in 2010 to facilitate the access of Palestinian workers to the labour market was signed on 21 February by the outgoing Minister of Labour but was immediately withdrawn for further consideration by his successor. The United Nations continues to urge the Lebanese authorities to improve the conditions in which Palestinian refugees live in Lebanon, without prejudice to the eventual resolution of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement in the region, in particular given the detrimental effects of dismal living conditions on the wider security situation.

33. Lebanese authorities have acknowledged the existence of good cooperation between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Palestinian security officials in the camps. However, with the exception of the Nahr al-Barid camp, Lebanese authorities do not maintain a permanent presence inside the camps, despite the fact that the Cairo agreement of 1969 — which permitted the presence of Palestinian armed forces in the refugees' camps — was annulled by the Lebanese Parliament in 1987. More will need to be done to contain tensions and potential violence in the camps.

34. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the camps continues to challenge the ability of Lebanon to exercise full sovereignty over its territory. In spite of the decision taken in 2006 by the National Dialogue, and confirmed at subsequent meetings of the National Dialogue, no progress was made with regard to dismantling the Damascus-headquartered PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada military bases in the country. All but one of these bases are located along the Syrian-Lebanese border. Their presence continues to compromise Lebanese sovereignty and governmental authority. It also poses a challenge to the effective control of the eastern border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. I have called consistently upon the Lebanese authorities to dismantle the PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada military bases, and on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with these efforts.

III. Observations

35. I am disappointed that there has been yet again no further progress towards the implementation of the remaining provisions of resolution 1559 (2004) over the past six months. I am concerned by the stagnation in the process of the implementation

of the resolution, which could lead to the erosion of the provisions already implemented. While I am aware that the remaining provisions of the resolution to be implemented are the most difficult and sensitive, and that the situation in the region has not been conducive to further progress on the outstanding provisions of resolution 1559 (2004), it is in the best interest of Lebanon and the Lebanese to make progress towards the full implementation of the resolution for the long-term stability of the country and the region. Much work lies ahead for the full implementation of resolution 1559 (2004).

36. Lebanon has witnessed relative political stability over the reporting period. This calm is very fragile, however, and increasingly vulnerable to the deterioration of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. I am deeply concerned about the impact of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic on the political and security situation in Lebanon. The Lebanese political leaders have widely differing views on events inside the Syrian Arab Republic and it is of paramount importance that they all protect Lebanon from potential repercussions. In this regard, I commend the Government of Prime Minister Mikati for its efforts to date to ensure that the negative impact of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic on Lebanon is limited.

37. I deplore the violent actions of the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic along the Lebanese-Syrian border that resulted in death and injury. These actions are unacceptable. I call upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic immediately to cease all such actions, and to respect Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity in accordance with resolution 1559 (2004).

38. The proliferation of weapons outside the State's authority combined with the continuing existence of heavily armed militias are of great concern to me for the stability of Lebanon. The presence of Hizbullah and other armed groups hampers the full implementation of resolution 1559 (2004). Armed groups defying the control of the State are incompatible with the objective of strengthening the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon and with the protection of the country's unique pluralistic system and the rights of Lebanese citizens. I condemn the possession and the use of illegal weapons wherever they occur in Lebanon, in particular in populated areas. I appeal once again to all parties and States to immediately halt all efforts to keep, transfer and acquire weapons and build paramilitary capacities outside the authority of the State. All foreign financial and material support for Lebanon must be channelled transparently through the Government of Lebanon only.

39. I took careful note during my last visit to Lebanon of the fact that the issue of Hizbullah's military arsenal constitutes a central bone of contention in the political debate in Lebanon with confessional overtones, but with implications for all Lebanese. The maintenance by Hizbullah of sizeable sophisticated military capabilities outside the control of the Government of Lebanon creates indeed an atmosphere of intimidation and represents a key challenge to the safety of Lebanese civilians and to the Government's monopoly on the legitimate use of force. It puts Lebanon in violation of its obligations under resolution 1559 (2004) and constitutes a threat to regional peace and stability. I call yet again upon the leaders of Hizbullah to immediately disarm and limit their activities to that of a Lebanese political party, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). In a democratic State, a political party cannot maintain its own militia. This remains

a fundamental anomaly that is incompatible with Lebanon's high ideals of the protection of human rights and democracy.

40. I also call upon the leadership of Hizbullah to stop all efforts to acquire weapons and build paramilitary capacities outside the authority of the State. As Hizbullah maintains close ties with a number of regional States, in particular with the Islamic Republic of Iran as acknowledged publicly by the Secretary-General of the militia himself, I call upon these States to encourage the transformation of the armed group into a solely political party and its disarmament, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004), in the best interests of regional peace and stability.

41. I am deeply disappointed that the provision of the resolution calling for the disbanding and disarming of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias has remained unaddressed for a long time. Such arms inherently jeopardize and undermine the ability of the State to exercise full sovereignty and control over its territory, as called for by the Taif Agreement and resolution 1559 (2004). This applies in particular to the considerable military capabilities that Hizbullah continues to maintain. It puts Lebanon in violation of its international obligations.

42. I remain convinced that the disarmament of armed groups in Lebanon, particularly Hizbullah, can best be achieved through a Lebanese-led cross-party political process, but this process cannot make headway until external actors cease their military support to Hizbullah and the group itself agrees to discuss its arsenal in good faith. I regret that the National Dialogue has not reconvened since November 2010. Irrespective of the particular composition of the government, the authority of the Lebanese State can be consolidated only through progress on the issue of arms beyond its control. Lebanon can and must revitalize the efforts to address the challenge posed by the continued presence of arms outside the authority of the Lebanese State either through the National Dialogue or other means it may deem appropriate. I urge the Lebanese leaders to resume and accelerate their discussions on the development of a national defence strategy and to achieve tangible progress. The end result of such a process must be that there are no weapons without the consent of the Government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon. I therefore call upon President Sleiman and Prime Minister Mikati to take tangible measures in this regard without delay.

43. I also encourage President Sleiman and the Government of Prime Minister Mikati to finally implement decisions taken in the past by the National Dialogue, such as the dismantling of Palestinian military bases maintained by the Damascus-headquartered PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada outside the refugee camps. The commitment of the Government's policy platform to the implementation of previous National Dialogue decisions must be materialized. These bases, most of which straddle the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, undermine Lebanese sovereignty and challenge the country's ability to manage its land borders. Mindful that these two militias maintain close regional ties, I expect the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to act constructively in this process.

44. I remain concerned by the conditions of hardship inside Palestinian refugee camps. I call on the Government of Lebanon to implement amendments to the Lebanese Labour Code and Social Security Law adopted in August 2010, so as to improve the employment prospects of Palestinian refugees. Moreover, the Government of Lebanon and donors should support and strengthen the work of the

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to ensure fundamental improvements in the living conditions of Palestinian refugees. Such progress would not prejudice the eventual resolution of the Palestinian refugee question in the context of a comprehensive regional peace agreement.

45. The profound political and humanitarian crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has further hindered progress towards the delineation and demarcation of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. I regret the absence of progress and urge the two countries to move forward on this issue, which has a significant impact on enhancing border control. The delineation of the border is critical to a positive relationship between the two countries.

46. I urge the Government of Lebanon to move forward and adopt and implement a comprehensive border management strategy in the coming period. Doing so would permit better control of Lebanon's international borders and prevent the illegal transfers of arms in both directions. This has become even more pressing in the context of the events in the neighbouring Syrian Arab Republic and would help to stem potential negative repercussions.

47. I deplore Israel's continuing violations of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity. I call upon Israel to adhere to its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and withdraw its forces from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, and cease its overflights of Lebanese airspace that raise tension, undermine the credibility of Lebanese security services, increase the risk of unintended conflict and generate anxiety among the civilian population.

48. The recurrence of security incidents throughout Lebanon remains of serious concern to me. I am in particular disturbed by the assassination attempt on Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea, which I strongly condemn. I call upon the Lebanese authorities to deploy every effort to arrest those responsible for this assassination attempt and bring them to justice. Attempts to destabilize the domestic situation in Lebanon by conducting political assassinations are unacceptable. The establishment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon signals the strong determination of the international community to put an end to impunity in Lebanon. In this context, I extended the mandate of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon for a period of three years, from 1 March 2012, and I thank the Government of Lebanon for transferring its share of the funding for the Tribunal's budget for 2011.

49. The latest security incidents in the country highlight the need for Lebanese security forces to do more to prevent the illegal use of weapons in the country. In this regard, I am grateful to those countries that are helping to equip and to train the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Internal Security Forces, and I urge the international community to continue this critically required support. This is essential to enable the Government of Lebanon to assume effectively its responsibilities under relevant Security Council resolutions.

50. The turmoil in the Syrian Arab Republic has further polarized political life in Lebanon. This should not however detract from the full implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) and all other Security Council resolutions pertaining to Lebanon, which remain the best way to ensure Lebanon's long-term prosperity and stability as a democratic State. It is indeed necessary that the spirit of cooperation and respect for the principles of coexistence and security in Lebanon prevail, as

must domestic peace without intimidation by armed groups. I remain concerned that the combination of mistrust among the parties and the continuing presence of militias could lead to tensions and possible insecurity and instability in Lebanon and beyond. I urge once again all political leaders to transcend sectarian and individual interests and genuinely promote the future and the interests of the State. They must preserve the comprehensive political framework of coexistence in mutual respect, as set out in the Taif Agreement.

51. I remain firmly committed to the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) for the sake of regional peace and stability, at a particularly difficult and challenging time. I, therefore, call on all parties and actors to fully abide by resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). I will continue my efforts towards the full implementation of these and all other Security Council resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.